

Start off 2015 With an Insurance Check-Up

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Plan now for life changes in the year ahead

Dover, DE-The start of a new year is a great time to reevaluate your current insurance policies. Insurance Commissioner Karen Weldin Stewart is passing along recommendations from the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC), which is reminding people that changing circumstances in their lives may lead to different insurance needs. Are you planning on having a baby in the year ahead? Getting married? Purchasing a new home or car? If so, you'll want to check whether you have the right types, and levels, of insurance coverage.

Take some time to talk with your agent and review your policies to see if they still meet your current needs. Your agent, and/or an HR staff member at your employer, can help determine whether your current policies provide adequate coverage or if you might need more or less. Even if you haven't experienced a life changing event, you could be eligible for discounts or new insurance products may better serve your needs.

Life Insurance

Changes—such as a birth, divorce, remarriage or even a new mortgage or new job—are indicators that you might need to make changes to your life insurance policy, at the very least, that you should review your policy.

Read your policy carefully and answer these questions:

- Do premiums or benefits vary from year to year?

- How much do the benefits build up in the policy?
- What part of the premiums or benefits is not guaranteed?
- What is the effect of interest on money paid and received at different times on the policy?
- In what situations and through what procedures can you assess cash values?
- Can the policy be converted into another form of insurance or annuity?

In the case of the birth of a child or a new marriage, you might want to consider increasing your death benefit. Check with your agent to see if your insurance company requires a physical exam before increasing your coverage levels.

Alternatively, events like paying off your mortgage, retirement or children finishing college might mean that you can lower your life insurance coverage and premiums. Your life insurance company might be able to offer “conversion privileges” from your current term life insurance policy to a new whole life insurance policy. You might also be able to expand your death benefits so they can be used while you are still living. Ask your insurance agent or company about these options.

Homeowners/Rental Insurance

This is a great time to update your home inventory and make sure your homeowners or rental policy is up-to-date. Take photos or video of the more costly items that you own. Remember to note any antique items and their value so you can talk with your insurance agent or insurance company to ensure that they are properly covered. If you need to create a home inventory, the NAIC’s free smartphone app, [myHOME Scr.APP.book](#), helps make the process easier. Download the app from iTunes or Google Play.

Remember to add any new gifts to your home inventory, too. Include as many details as you can and take a photo of each

item. Most basic home insurance policies have standard limits for big-ticket items like electronics, art, jewelry or sporting equipment. You may need special coverage, so call your agent to discuss changes for your policy.

Last year's winter was brutally cold and many people experiences flooding due to burst pipes in their homes. If the damage to the home is extensive you can expect repairs to take 30 to 60 days, or more. With the proper homeowners and rental insurance policies you and your family will have temporary housing paid for while the repairs are completed.

Auto Insurance

Call your insurance company annually to ask about discounts. Discounts can be available because your age, employer, membership in certain organizations and clubs – sometimes you can even get a discount by subscribing to a certain magazine. If you have a new job and are driving more, or less, than you used to you should make sure you always keep that information current with your insurance company.

Take some time to check your auto insurance policy by following the guidelines below:

- Make sure your coverage is appropriate for your life situation. Liability is the part of the policy that pays for any injury or damage if you cause an accident. If your liability insurance is too low, it is possible that you could be sued for any damages above your liability limits.
- Review your deductibles for comprehensive and collision coverage. This is the amount you will pay if your car is damaged or totaled without fault of another driver. Raising or lowering this amount can affect your premium.
- Before hitting the road, make sure you have a copy of your insurance card and your insurance agent or company's number in your vehicle. Delaware now allows

for electronic proof of auto insurance. But, since not all states accept electronic insurance cards it is best to keep a paper copy of your card in your car at all times.

Protect Yourself

Insurance fraud can happen to anyone, anywhere. Protect yourself in 2015 and beyond by following the tips below:

- Don't give out any personal information—like your social security number, Medicare number, or bank information—over the phone until you have verified the legitimacy of the insurance company and agent. Use the free *Licensee Lookup* tool on the Department of Insurance website, www.delawareinsurance.gov, to verify the status of an agent's insurance license. You can also verify a license by calling the Department of Insurance at 302-674-7300.
- Ask for copies of everything you sign and keep a copy of the payment receipt or check for the initial premium payment you gave the agent for the policy.
- Call the insurance company if you don't receive a copy of the insurance policy outlining your coverage and its limitations within 30 days of your purchase.

More Information

Find more information about your insurance needs and tips for choosing the coverage that is best for you and your family at www.insureUonline.org. Additional information can be found at www.delawareinsurance.gov.

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